

The Government of the Slovak Republic

Strategy of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Solution of the Problems of the Roma National Minority and the Set of Measures for Its Implementation

Stage I

**The document was approved at the session of the Government of the Slovak Republic
on 27 September 1999**

Part 1

Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic concerning the Strategy of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Solution of the Problems of the Roma National Minority and the Set of Measures for Its Implementation - Stage I

The Government

A. adopts

- A.1. the Strategy of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Solution of the Problems of the Roma National Minority and the Set of Measures for Its Implementation - Stage I (hereinafter "Strategy and Set of Measures") with the comments adopted on the session of the government.

B. tasks

Deputy Prime Minister P. Csáky

- B.1. with the co-ordination of preparation and evaluation of projects addressing the challenges of the Roma national minority financed from the state budget on the basis of the Strategy and the Set of Measures, and submitting these projects to the Government for discussion

*February, September,
annually*

- B.2. with the harmonization of the 2001 – 2002 PHARE Minority Development Programme with the Strategy and the Set of Measures.

by 31 March 2000

Ministers

Heads of Regional Authorities

- B.3. with the breaking down of the 2000 Strategy and the Set of Measures into concrete measures including their financial coverage from own budget chapters.

by 30 November 1999

- B.4. with the elaboration of quantified requirements on the state budget according to the plan of concrete measures during the period of 2001 and following state budgets preparation; these should then be submitted to the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, information on financial requirements shall also be submitted to the Government Commissioner on Roma Affairs

*by April 2000
and annually*

- B.5. with co-operation with NGOs in expedient use of funds and experience for the solutions of Roma national minority problems

continuously

Heads of Regional Authorities

- B.6. with the arrangement of having the job description of social field workers allocated to address the problems of citizens requiring special assistance pursuant to Resolution of the Government No. 310/1996 and No. 977/1995 changed, addressing the problems of the Roma national minority in the relevant regions

immediately

- B.7. with the establishment of the office of an adviser to the head of the regional authority on Roma affairs; this new activity should be covered without staff requirements beyond the set limit.

by 31 December 1999

Government Commissioner on Roma Affairs

- B.8. with the co-ordination of the implementation of concrete governmental measures and focusing on the expedient use of state budget funds for the Set of Measures

continuously

- B.9. with the submission of year 2000 measures proposal drafted from the materials prepared by ministries and regional authorities that will positively encourage addressing of Roma national minority difficulties

by 31 January 2000

- B.10. with the regular submission of information from ministries and regional authorities on the implementation of concrete measures in the last calendar year to the session of the Government

by 31 May 2001 and annually

- B.11. with the co-ordination of the drafting and implementation of concrete projects addressing the problems of the Roma national minority in the spirit of the Strategy and the Set of Measures

continuously

- B.12. with organizing working meetings of experts from the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic to assure a common process in the solution of the problems of the Roma national minority

continuously

- B.13. with the provision of expert information on the implementation of the Strategy and Set of Measures for the V-4 summit in Bratislava

by 10 December 1999

Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

in cooperation with the Minister of the Interior and Minister of Justice

- B.14. with analysing the grounds for racial discrimination, with creation of conditions preventing manifestations of racial discrimination, and, if necessary, to submit draft amendment of relevant acts or new draft laws to the session of the Government

by April 2000, then continuously

Minister of Justice

- B.15. with the arrangement of systemic training of staff of the Corps of Prison and Court Guard of the Slovak Republic, and judges in compliance with their continuing education on human rights with regard to the Roma national minority

continuously

Minister of the Interior

- B.16. with the arrangement of systemic training of the staff of the Police Corps with view to the Roma national minority in compliance with their continuing education and training on human rights

continuously

Minister of Education

- B.17. with the completion of the concept of educating and training of Romany children and pupils; to include it into the Long-term Concept of Education and Training Development, which is in progress

*conclude work by 31 January 2000,
to incorporate in compliance with the approval process*

- B.18. with provision of conditions for a sectoral research on the situation of Romany child and pupil in the school education and training system.

by 31 December 1999

Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

- B.19. with provision for material and technical conditions for a research studying belonging to the Romany national minority as a factor of social differentiation and risk of social exclusion, including proposals in the social protection system

by 31 December 1999

Minister of Culture

- B.20. with provision for the promotion of Romany culture and Romany language development, in particular by adopting a mechanism of regular, early and adequate subsidy from state budget

by 31 December 1999

Minister of the Environment

in cooperation with the Minister of Education

- B.21. with the drafting of a programme of environmental education and training in co-operation with the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic and with active participation of civic associations and NGOs dealing with the challenges of the Romany national minority

by 31 May 2000

Minister of Finance

- B.22. with incorporating a special amount into the Reserves for Projects Addressing the Problems of the Romany National Minority in the General Treasury Administration of the draft law on the State Budget for the year of 2000

C. recommends

Director of the Slovak National Human Rights Centre

- C.1. to monitor manifestations of racial and other discrimination and, if necessary, to initiate amendments of relevant legislation or proposals for solutions

Romany civic associations and Romany initiatives

NGOs

Director of the Slovak National Human Rights Centre

Director General of the National Labour Authority

Director General of Slovak Television

Director General of Slovak Radio

Chairperson of the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Slovak Republic

Chairperson of the Association of Towns and Municipalities of the Slovak Republic

Director General of the Association of Employers' Unions and Associations of the Slovak Republic

President of the Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic

- C.2. to co-operate in the implementation of the Strategy and the Set of Measures, to propose solutions and to actively participate in the drafting of such measures that will positively encourage solutions of the problems of the Romany national minority

Prosecutor General

- C. 3. to co-operate with the Minister of Justice and Minister of the Interior in the implementation process resulting from task No. B.14 of this resolution
- C. 4. with the arrangement of systemic training of procurators in compliance with their continuing education on human rights with regard to the Roma national minority

D. repeals

- D.1. Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 796/1997 to the draft of the Conceptual Plans of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Solution of the Problems of the Roma under Current Social and Economic Conditions.

To be implemented by:

Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of the Slovak Republic, P. Csáky
Ministers of the Government of the Slovak Republic
Government Commissioner on Roma Affairs
Heads of regional authorities

For information of :

President of the Slovak Republic
Romany civic associations and Romany initiatives,
NGOs,
Director of the Slovak National Human Rights Centre
Director General of the National Labour Authority
Director General of Slovak Television
Director General of Slovak Radio
Chairperson of the Union of Towns and Municipalities of the Slovak Republic
Chairperson of the Association of Towns and Municipalities of the Slovak Republic
President of the Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic
Director General of the Association of Employers' Unions and Associations of the Slovak Republic
Inforoma

Set of Measures for Implementation – Stage I

Human rights and rights of persons belonging to national minorities

1. To co-ordinate the implementation of the PHARE Minority Tolerance Programme
Deputy Prime Minister P. Csáky
continuously
2. Under short-term activities to implement projects: the Exercise of Roma Human Rights to Improve the Self-Organising Capability of the Roma National Minority, publishing of the textbook The Roma as We Know Them, the Romany Hands project, Slovak television series on Romany issues
Government Commissioner on Roma Affairs
by 31 December 1999
3. To elaborate an analysis of the situation in the legal protection of the Roma national minority against manifestations of intolerance including a proposal of further action
Minister of Justice
by 31 December 1999
4. To elaborate information according to the final recommendations of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination addressed to the individual countries of Europe concerning the elimination of racial discrimination and intolerance
Minister of Foreign Affairs
by 31 January 2000

Education and training

1. To discuss the Concept of the Development of Education and Training in the Next 15 – 20 Years, which will also include the concept of education and training of Romany children and pupils, according to the 1999 Main Tasks Plan of Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic and the 2000 – 2002 Programme Plan of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic
Minister of Education
December 1999
2. To continue the organization and financial support to the pilot project of the Educational Centre for the Development of the Romany National Minority for the Children of the Kosice Region at the Secondary School of Arts in Kosice
Minister of Education
Regional Authority, Kosice
3. To implement the Concept of Pre-school Education Development with an emphasis on the year just before compulsory school attendance also in the spirit of preparing children of parents from Romany national minority for the first grade of basic school
Minister of Education

district authorities
continuously

4. To provide for concrete prerequisites to strengthen the education of Romany intellectuals at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra and Presov University in compliance with the PHARE Minority Tolerance Programme

Minister of Education
by 31 May 2000

5. To elaborate and to evaluate the analysis of linguistically disadvantaged and socially deprived pupils success rate with a focus on the pupils of parents of Romany ethnic origin

Minister of Education
by 31 May 2000

6. To continue the experimental project of preparatory (pre-school) classes at basic schools, to evaluate the appropriateness of implementation at other schools

Minister of Education,
regional authorities
according to the project experimental
verification schedule

7. To create conditions for Romany children to study at secondary schools including church and private schools while the requirements for secondary school study are satisfied

regional authorities in co-
operation with headmasters,
Minister of Education
continuously

8. To draft, at the level of regional and district authorities, annual and also long-term concrete plans of education and training of children and pupils of Romany parents focusing on topics and needs relevant for the respective region

regional and district authorities
30 November 1999,
the year of 2000

Language and culture

1. To provide financial contributions by the Ministry of Culture to recommended culture related projects submitted by Romany entities after their assessment in the Ministry of Culture Commission with respect to grant appropriateness

Minister of Culture
continuously

2. To provide a state budget contribution by the Ministry of Culture on the basis of submitted financial budgets of Romany journals and newspapers as recommended by the expert commission

Minister of Culture

continuously

3. To provide for a smooth operation of the ROMATHAN theatre, to provide expert and financial assistance to specialized seminars, final evaluation of theatre season, to facilitate participation in theatre festivals, and to promote the theatre abroad
Regional Authority Kosice,
Minister of Culture
continuously

Un/employment

1. To increase the share of re-skilling in the tools of active labour market policies for the Roma in branches lacking manpower (according to regional and local conditions), e.g. in textile production, cloth-making, leather and rubber products processing, health care, school system and social care
regional authorities, district
authorities in co-operation with
the National Labour Authority
continuously
2. To support publicly beneficial works in those districts that are hit by high Roma unemployment and where there are no conditions for job creation. This applies mainly to the districts in the regions of Banska Bystrica, Kosice and Presov
regional authorities, district
authorities in co-operation with
the National Labour Authority
continuously
3. To support, in an appropriate form of counselling, also Romany entrepreneurs in the establishment and running of SMEs
regional authorities, district
authorities in co-operation with
the Ministry of Economy
(National SME Centre)
continuously

Housing

1. In co-operation with municipal authorities: to provide for the elaboration of a list of Romany settlements without potable water source, sewage system, communal waste disposal and/or located on waste polluted or contaminated plots
Ministry for the Environment,
Government Commissioner on
Roma Affairs
D: 1999
2. To provide for the elaboration or updating of the list of Romany settlements specifically listing the number of Romany dwellings (shelters) built without a building permit and technical infrastructure needs
Ministry of Construction and Public Works in
co-operation with the Ministry of the
Environment, municipal authorities

June 2000

Social sector

1. To provide methodological assistance to the bodies of local state administration and to co-operate with non-state entities in efforts to address the Romany issue
Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs
and Family,
Government Commissioner on
Roma Affairs
continuously
2. To create conditions for educational-recreational facilities for Romany children from families in material and/or social need
Ministry of Labour, Social
Affairs and Family,
regional authorities, district
authorities
Government Commissioner on
Roma Affairs
continuously
3. To create conditions in the system of training of the staff at regional authority/district authority social affairs departments, for gathering information on the life of the Romany national minority, on the way of communicating with them, and on pragmatic solutions of their problems
Ministry of Labour, Social
Affairs and Family,
Government Commissioner
on Roma Affairs
continuously

Healthcare

1. To continue the implementation of the project Schools Supporting Health which proved well in areas with higher concentrations of the Romany population, in particular in the region of Banska Bystrica, Presov and Kosice
Ministry of Education of the
Slovak Republic, Ministry of
Health of the Slovak Republic
1999 – 2000
2. To prevent the occurrence and transmission of infectious diseases in Romany settlements through targeted preventive anti-epidemiological measures and increased hygiene supervision by relevant departments of the State Health Institute
Ministry of Health
1999 – 2000
3. To support as a priority the establishment of house nursing agencies in the regions with high concentrations of Romany population, in particular in the regions of Kosice, Presov and Banska Bystrica

regional authorities
1999 - 2000

4. To implement projects elaborated by the Institute of Health Education in Bratislava

A. "Promoting health awareness of Romany children, aged 6 to 12". The goal of the project is to increase health awareness of Romany children

Ministry of Health of the Slovak
Republic,
Ministry of Education of the
Slovak Republic
1999 - 2000

B. "Promoting health awareness of Romany children, aged 10 to 15". The goal of the project is to influence basic hygienic and sanitary habits of Romany children through health education

Ministry of Health
Ministry of Education
1999 – 2000

C. "Preparing Roma citizens for marriage and family planning". The plan of the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic is to implement these projects through the National Health Promotion Centre

Ministry of Health of the Slovak
Republic
1999 - 2000

Part 2

Explanatory Report

The Government of the Slovak Republic has declared its objective to create conditions for a full enjoyment of the rights of national minorities in its 1998 Programme Declaration and also at one of its first sessions. The Government has also condemned such extreme expressions like intolerance, racism, xenophobia, fascism and all manifestations of animosity against persons belonging to a national minority. At its session in Casta-Papiernicka on 2 May, 1999 the Government has also confirmed its plan to find solutions for the problems of the Romany national minority.

The appointment of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for the Solution of the Problems of the Roma Minority (hereinafter “Government Commissioner”) and building of his office is an expression of the endeavour of the Government of the Slovak Republic to find systemic solutions for the challenges the Romany national minority is facing.

The Government Commissioner, during his visits conducted to settlements and places where the Roma live, has acquired personal experience on the serious, sometimes even shocking problems. Therefore, the Government Commissioner, together with the Chairman of the Commission for Human Rights and Minorities of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, initiated a fact-finding mission to the East of Slovakia in order to map the situation of the Romany national minority. The participants of this mission conveyed the results of their study to the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights, Minorities and Regional Development.

In April 1999, the desperate situation found mainly in the Romany national minority, the several really existing problems in the life of Romany society and their perception and evaluation by the majority society as well as the openly declared willingness of the Government of the Slovak Republic and its effort to find expedite and pragmatic solutions to these challenges resulted in an **initiative plan** to submit the draft to the Government of the Slovak Republic for discussion. During the period when this material was drafted, the Government held three sessions on partial solutions of the Romany national minority problems – Resolution of the Government No. 716/1999 to Complete the Building of the Secretariat of the Government Commissioner, Resolution of the Government No. 715/1999 on the Use of 1999 State Budget Funds on Projects addressing the Problems of the Romany Community and Resolution of the Government No. 644/1999 of 4 August 1999 on the Progress Report on the Solutions of Romany Issues.

In compliance with Resolution of the Government No. 644, point B.12. the presented material includes a part of the original initiative plan in the form of a consistent long-term strategy addressing the Romany issues in the Strategy and the Set of Measures; it maps and defines the problems and presents a proposal for creating conditions for the solutions of the problems at the level of the Government. In compliance with Resolution No. 644, point B.7 a draft resolution of the Government providing for systemic measures to resolve the Romany issue is drafted and concrete measures providing for the solutions of the Romany national minority challenges are presented in the Set of Measures.

The drafter and presenter of the material assume that the adoption of the **Strategy and the Set of Measures** (hereinafter the “Strategy”) and subsequent breaking down of these documents – with an active engagement of the Roma themselves - to the level of ministries and regional authorities in order to create appropriate conditions directly in the field will help to gradually solve the long lasting difficult situation of the Romany national minority. Therefore, the Government submits in the presented material that ministries and regional

authorities prepare **measures** in the spirit of the proposed Strategy in the determined time limit. This will also be contained in the **Strategy – Stage II**.

The draft Strategy includes a proposal of the approach to the solutions of Romany national minority challenges in a new, democratic way. At the same time, creative participation of other state authorities, their co-operation with bodies of self-governments, which have intimate knowledge of the relevant region is respected. The draft recommends the Government of the Slovak Republic to have the participation and co-operation of authorities and organizations of the Third Sector with the state administration included, mainly in the form of applying activities successful in the solution of problems of Romany national minority, in order to concentrate the experience and funds for the achievement of common goals for the benefit of the Roma and the whole society.

The drafting of the Strategy was a process, which put special emphasis on participation in its preparation and on materials prepared by Romany entities and outstanding Romany individuals. Therefore, the participation of the Roma in the solutions of the problems in practice is a fundamental premise for the implementation of the Strategy.

The line of thinking in the material presented to the Government of the Slovak Republic was determined during two working meetings analysing the Romany national minority situation. As early as on 16 March, 1999, Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Human Rights, Minorities and Regional Development and the Chairman of the Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for National Minorities and Ethnic Groups together with the Government Commissioner on Roma Affairs convened with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung the first round-table discussion at Samorin-Cilistov. OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, M. van der Stoep also attended a part of the event. The second round-table was held in Bratislava on 26 April, 1999, supported by the British Know How Fond and also attended by the Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. These working sessions were received by the participating Roma representatives, representatives of political parties, heads of regional and district authorities, representatives of EU Member States embassies, V4 embassies with high interest. Both working meetings stated a need for a speedy, pragmatic solution of the difficult conditions of a part of the Romany national minority living in the Slovak Republic.

The presented material was drafted at the Secretariat of the Government Commissioner on Roma Affairs. The Government Commissioner sent a letter with accurately defined requirements for documentation needed for the session of the Government of the Slovak Republic to all ministries and regional authorities. Almost 60% of the respondents failed to answer the first call or their answers were not relevant. Therefore, the Government Commissioner convened a working session on the issue at the Government Office on 18 May, 1999, where he explained requirements for the documentation to be submitted by the ministries.

While drafted, the material was consulted with Romany entities, NGO organizations and bodies of the Third Sector, as well as competent research institutes. It was also discussed by the Advisory Board to the Government Commissioner and observations and recommendations were incorporated in the presented draft. The material was consulted with OSCE experts as well.

Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights, Minorities and Regional Development convened a working session of competent ministerial representatives to discuss the presented material on 22 September, 1999.

The material was also discussed at the session of the Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for National Minorities and Ethnic Groups on 24 September, 1999.

Part V includes the results of the inter-ministerial review and the basic principle of legal explanation of the presented material. The drafter of the material thanks for valuable

comments and proposals, which improved the presented material and were, therefore, accepted.

The Strategy of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Solution of the Problems of the Roma National Minority

By adopting the presented material, the Government of the Slovak Republic has accepted as a fundamental reality the fact that the Roma, as they are, form a part of the life of our society. The failure to resolve their difficult situation, in particular the one that was not caused by them and that the Roma themselves want to change positively, may cause undesired social movements. The solution of the challenges the Romany national minority is facing should be understood as a problem concerning the whole society. The Government states that, in a situation when relatively high numbers of inhabitants live at or below the subsistence minimum, the solution of the Romany national minority problems must be approached with the right balance between a humane solution of this problem and the solution determined by the possibilities of the state.

The Government concentrates on creating conditions for Roma national minority problem resolution in areas where the situation is critical – unemployment, housing, health status, social sector and the school system, or where there are grounds for improvement – human rights, rights of persons belonging to national minorities, co-operation with NGOs and regional development:

Human rights, rights of persons belonging to national minorities and NGOs. On the European scale, the Roma are considered a pan-European specific non-territorial ethnic minority whose different way of life traditionally (historically) wakes intolerance among majority population. And though in international documents the Roma are considered a “European” minority, countries always apply pragmatic interests in their practical policies and any movements of this minority among states are received with negative feelings. The problems caused by the specific way of life of a part of the Romany national minority and the problems of co-existence with the majority part of the society, as well as the right choice of emancipation processes represent an exceptionally difficult multi-spectral problem, the solution of which is, also in other European countries, a topic of an open dialogue. The need to raise their social standard as an inter-stage in national emancipation comes to the fore.

The Roma in the Slovak Republic represent a specific national minority. This minority was really disadvantaged or even discriminated against for long time, with respect to the enjoyment of their rights as a result of their ethnic differences and historic and social conditions. The materialization of the protection of rights of persons belonging to the Romany national minority and the guarantee of the state in their social and ethnic emancipation are still insufficient.

The situation of the Roma is the object of constant criticism by Romany political parties and civil associations, in particular with respect to emigration and it is stated in as its reason in submitted applications for asylum in several Western European countries. Some aspects of life of a certain part of this minority cause social distance in the majority society, which is then unjustly applied to the whole minority.

Despite the fact that the protection of human rights and rights of persons belonging to national minorities is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Slovak Republic and its laws, which express the European standards in a declaratory form, the practical application of human rights protection and protection of rights of persons belonging to national minorities in real life is not absolute, in particular with respect to the citizens from Romany national minority.

It is necessary to reassess the protection of the Roma against racially motivated violent crime. Most of these offences and violations are still not reported to police authorities. Since December 1998, the police has started to take more energetic actions against skinheads. Under the new Government, the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic has ceased to register crime perpetrators with a reference to their Roma ethnic origin. This measure, applied mainly in mass media, has prevented instigation of racial hatred.

From the above facts it is clear that, after 1989, the state has paid only inconsistent campaign-like attention without an adequate information base to the solution of the Romany issue and the issue of co-existence. No sufficient economic and institutional prerequisites for an effective solution of this problems had been created. The Romany issue and it solutions have become a political issue to an extent which is unacceptable. Police bodies, the prosecution authority and public administration do not always have a sufficiently sensitive approach to conflict resolution in an impartial way without any prejudice. This is also the reason why the Roma mistrust the bodies of public administration and law enforcement agencies.

The Government shall therefore provide for having measures that prevent discrimination against and persecution of a part of the Romany population by public administration authorities adopted. One of the prerequisites for the materialization of the objectives of the Government is the training of all civil servants and self-government staff, judges, police in racism related issues and their training in more effective communication skills and conflict resolution skills.

In all elections after 1989, the Roma have failed to have their own political parties in the parliament. So far, 16 they have not achieved such a level of social structures that would make them to support, in higher numbers, a certain Romany political party defending their interests. The fragmentation of Romany political parties has prevented them from entering the political scene as a relevant entity. The solution for safeguarding the interests of associations of the Romany national minority is the establishment of non-governmental, Romany and pro-Romany civil associations and generally beneficial societies. The Romany minority themselves must also realize their co-responsibility for their destiny.

NGOs have significantly contributed to the detection of extreme cases of violation of human rights of the Roma, they have helped the victims and they have demanded a fair sentencing of the perpetrators. They have significantly contributed to the lifting of state power concealment of human rights violations – thus, they have become significant actors in the enhancement of civic awareness. The charity activities of NGOs have helped to moderate the material and social need of a part of the Romany population, they have also provided material assistance in natural disasters. The unselfish activities of volunteers for the benefit of the Romany population have played significant role in education, development of cultural and societal activities.

The Government shall therefore continue their support to NGOs activities and shall direct them to assist that part of the Romany population, which is in need of them. Measures for co-ordination with NGO activities shall be adopted also with the help of the Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for NGOs at the level of state administration authorities. Grants shall be awarded as a priority to social and educational projects oriented mainly on Romany children and youth, promotion of the Romany national minority and the improvement of co-existence between the Romany national minority and the rest of the society. The strength of this approach is the fact that the NGOs know the local and regional situation and can make the best use of local resources.

It is therefore desirable that the enhancement of legal awareness in human rights and rights of persons belonging to national minority be continued so that it achieves not only a comparable level with the majority population but also a higher standard of legal awareness in

the field of human rights protection and the protection of persons belonging to national minorities. Therefore the Government shall care for consistent application of current legal norms and their amendment, where necessary.

Education and training. This area is a priority in addressing the problems of the Romany community. Monitoring reports and knowledge gained from teachers of Romany children assess the situation of Romany children in the educational system as very serious. They point out certain alarming phenomena having a negative impact on the process of education and training.

The consequence of the existing rigid school system is that many of the adult Roma have even failed to complete basic education. This has resulted in a situation where they are not capable to cope with their problems in the spirit of the exercise of their rights, to meet their obligations, to find jobs, housing, to improve their social status, etc. The Government is also interested to find effective solutions for these continuing problems because the improvement of the education and training of Romany children is the determining prerequisite for a good successful solution of other problems (e.g. un/employment, overcoming the situation of material need). In order to achieve this goal the Government shall create such conditions for the implementation of school system changes that the Romany children will have an opportunity to be equally successful as other children.

The Government envisages to exercise positive encouragement by adopting fast solutions to the most critical issues in the form of measures taken in those sectors that are responsible for the education of children and adults. Educational and training programmes for adult Roma guide the responsible ministries in a direction target to such a form of education and training that will create prerequisites for the change of the value system inside Romany families. Therefore the Government shall design its measures in such a way that education would become an accepted value and a prerequisite for a successful solution of own ethnic – national, societal, cultural, social, economic problems by the educated Roma themselves.

Until 1991, 85 – 90% of all Romany children attended kindergartens. Today, depending on the region, this figure ranges from 0 – 15 % of the total number of Romany children (the most important indicator of this situation is the insolvency of these children's parents). This situation increases the probability of failure at school of those children who do not attend a kindergarten. Therefore, the Government shall create conditions for pre-school education of 5-year old children at kindergartens and the Government shall gradually create conditions for the education of children in kindergarten from the age of 3.

The language knowledge and skills of these children who have no possibility to learn the language of instruction and to develop their skills necessary for school at home, are a special problem. In the time before they go to school they have never used a pencil, pen and other tools commonly used in other population. This disadvantaged position is the determining factor for the initial failure of Romany children.

The initial failure of Romany pupils which is one of the conditions for successful learning, does not motivate the children to continue learning, to acquire higher education or to go to school. Thus, the conditions for a growing number of illiterate persons - only in this national minority among those which live in the territory of the Slovak Republic - are created. The Government shall address this vicious circle with a measure creating conditions for a change of the school system that will give equal success opportunities to Romany children.

While drafting the concept of education and training development for the next 15 - 20 years the sector of education will also draft the concept of education and training of Romany children in the spirit of removing inequalities identified in this material. The Government shall secure that at all schools education and training will be multi-cultural and will promote tolerance. The objective of this education is a peaceful co-existence of all citizens in a multi-

cultural society. Therefore it is necessary to have the whole society informed about the Romany culture and history. This should be mainly achieved through school education. Knowing other cultures helps to build positive attitudes and removes prejudice – xenophobia.

The Government shall support solutions addressing topical challenges in the education and training through positively stimulating activities for Romany children: methods removing language barriers will be used, the application of pre-school (zero) grades that were introduced as an experiment in 1992, will be enlarged. Depending on the need and interest the Romany language will be used as supporting language of instruction; teaching of the Romany language, education in the Romany language (pursuant to the curriculum of 1993 approved by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic) will be made possible, pilot projects testing the function of Romany assistants at kindergartens and basic schools will be launched. Out of school activities and interest activities as a form of preparation for the next day at school and a vehicle to develop the talents, to prevent drug addiction, and anti-social behaviour are promoted. The Government shall assure that the various “suspended” projects that functioned well (various experiments, approved curricula using the Romany language, pre-school – zero classes, and others) will be continued again, completed and prepared for the legislative pipeline.

The system, in which many Romany children must attend special schools and which is for them a life-long handicap predestining them to less skilled work, will be replaced with flexible equalizing basic school classes which have less pupils than it is the case in common classes. Educational psychological counselling centres examining children before starting basic education will consistently evaluate real prerequisites and shall in no case allow their confusion with inadequacy caused by language barrier and deprived social environment in which the Romany children live.

There are too few Romany students at comprehensive secondary schools and vocational secondary schools – some 3%. Most of them attend apprentice secondary schools or vocational secondary schools – however, this is also only 8 % of the Romany population.

In the present system of education a Romany student overcoming all the hurdles and attending a university is quite an exception. However, this fact is not caused by the inaptness of the Romany population.

Unskilled adult Roma is one of the main reasons for their difficulties in the labour market, dependence on social benefits and the overall social and material need. Therefore the Government shall provide for a positive encouragement to open secondary education opportunities and to allow higher qualification for the persons belonging to the Romany national minority.

The Government shall also support activities in the field of education and training of adult Roma. This will be a joint responsibility of several sectors. The Ministry of Education shall create conditions for free education and additional basic and secondary education for the adult Roma who suffered from the existing system of education. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family shall provide effective forms of re-skilling and counselling that will help the Roma to orientate in market economy and market society (see also the part on social assistance and un/employment).

The sector of education lacks scientific studies on the facts determining the difficult situation of a Romany child in the education and training process. So far, everything has been built on empirical experience of teachers, in particular those who teach Romany children. In order to facilitate objective and successful solution of the situation of Romany children in the process of education, the Government shall create conditions for the necessary research.

Language and culture. Despite the fact that the Constitution of the Slovak Republic guarantees the rights of national minorities, the reality of past practice was different.

Language and culture – these two features out of the basic dominant characteristics of the Romany national minority – and the need of their development have often been ignored, overlooked, in the education system and the sector of culture.

The Romany language, despite its diversity and multitude of dialects – is a means of understanding for all the Roma wherever they may live. It is a language used in literature (poetry, prose), drama and music, in daily press and fiction, it is taught at the Department of Romany Culture at Constantine the Philosopher University of Nitra and the Secondary School of Arts in Kosice, there is a dictionary, a Romany primer and reader. These facts also make the answer to the question concerning the codification of the Romany language.

The Romany culture has mostly been narrowed down to Romany songs, dances and music. The policy based on subsidies from the state budget prevented its broader development, and, thus, the previous government reduced the potential of the development of their culture and cultural organizations and clubs to a minimum. Administrative measures “merging” theatres and cultural organizations, institutions and publishing houses caused the stagnation of the only Romany theatre (an institution important also on the world-wide scale), Romany newspapers and journals, ensembles, cultural clubs, song and dance festivals, etc.

The Government shall have a positive approach to the cultural and linguistic values of the Romany national minority by recognizing the language and culture of the Roma as distinct cultural values of the society in the Slovak Republic. The Romany language and the Romany culture shall enjoy not only protection but also support for development. The measures the Government shall take will include creation of conditions for the preservation, cultivation and development of the Romany language at universities in Nitra and Presov. The Government shall provide conditions for the development of culture, cultural activities and publishing of periodicals and non-periodicals of cultural organizations, clubs and publishing houses. It shall support research on culture and history of the Roma in Slovakia, which will then be used by competent persons involved in the Romany issues.

The Government supports projects for the Roma and about the Roma in mass media. Romany editorial groups will be established in public media.

The Government shall positively encourage the development of Romany culture mainly by adopting a mechanism of regular and early subsidy from the state budget – within the limits of the state budget - for the cultivation and development of the Romany culture as a whole.

Un/employment. The high unemployment of the Romany population is one of the key issues, which need addressing. In addition of financial burden to the state it is also a source of other negative phenomena including criminality, social decline, drug addiction, prostitution, disturbance of family links, etc. It is only natural that in some municipalities the Government shall pay increased attention to the group of citizens who are hit by high unemployment. The reasons of Romany unemployment include in addition to low skills, also the reluctance of concerned institution to deal with the extreme unemployment of the Roma. They often justify this attitude with the “civic principle”. Public prejudice against the Roma - that they do not want to work, that they steal and always demand some advantages – raises among the Roma the feeling of injustice determined by their objectionable behaviour and outrage.

Worse health condition, low skill, a large group granted partial invalidity deteriorates the employment situation among the Roma, creates pressures in the labour market where no jobs exist and almost no new jobs are created for this group. These citizens usually end in the records of employment offices.

A part of the Romany population lacks interest in working, suffers from bad work morale, poor reliability, low work endurance and has unrealistic wage requirements. All this

builds up negative experience of employers and, thus, also their lack of interest to employ the Roma. These facts also contribute to the shocking unemployment rate of the Roma.

Other causes of the high unemployment are the mistrust to Romany business people who have difficulties to compete with their Romany labour against the non-Romany companies. They also do not have assets that could be used as guarantees for loans they need in order to materialize their business plans. The slow down or even halt of large building projects, e.g. housing development, building of industrial facilities, roads, break down of agricultural co-operatives, have also worsened the situation.

The task of the state employment policy is to create favourable conditions that will allow the Romany citizens to acquire starting position in the access to the labour market equal to the citizens from the majority society. It is important that under current legislation public procurement conditions enabling participation of the Roma in works they are capable of, be created. This would gradually reduce the dependence on social benefits and would develop the feeling of work and social responsibility. The Government shall concentrate on the improvement of the level of education of the unemployed registered persons seeking job, mainly in younger age categories, which have prerequisites to complete training courses. It is also necessary to encourage higher personal responsibility of citizens of Romany ethnic origin in job-seeking.

The Government shall support publicly beneficial workplaces in the districts hit by high unemployment of the Roma and lacking conditions for job creation. The districts concerned are mainly in the region of Banska Bystrica, Presov, Kosice.

The Government shall also concentrate on such regional policy that will focus on the economic development of the regions, further development of SMEs and foreign investors inflow. Thus, conditions for job creation will be provided.

The Government shall re-assess the possibility of positive economic incentives helping business people and employers to make work financially more attractive than social benefits. This should help to increase the employment of the Roma and to rectify the relations between the Roma and the majority society.

Housing. Housing is one of the most burning challenges in the Romany national minority issue. Satisfying the housing needs of citizens requiring social assistance and living mainly in Romany settlements is an open problem also due to the fact that the standard of their dwellings is deeply below the housing standard of the majority population.

At the end of 1998 there were 591 Romany settlements with a total of 124,031 inhabitants registered in Slovakia. This translates into 22,732 families living in 13,882 dwellings. This also means that in a Romany settlement there are in average 8.93 inhabitants per one dwelling.

Most of the dwellings in Romany settlements can be characterized as simple shelters built mostly of wood, clay and plate. In better cases they would have plaster on the outside walls. These dwellings do not meet the valid technical and hygiene standards, they have been constructed as self-help, without a building permit and without settlement of ownership to the land.

Out of the total of 591 Romany settlements, 67 settlements are located outside municipalities, and 175 settlements are located at the border of municipalities or in close vicinity to municipalities, resp. villages.

The failure to observe the building line in the building of dwellings and the absence of public lighting makes access to settlements difficult for ambulances, fire vehicles, solid communal waste disposal, etc. The absence of telecommunications in settlements or their vicinity makes calling help in crisis situation impossible.

Out of total 124,031 inhabitants living in settlements, 48,861 were children to the age of 15 and 75,170 persons were adults. 8,664 citizens were employed. This number includes 5,940 women on maternity leaves and 1,066 citizens under vocational training.

The above facts show that the current situation in the Romany settlements in Slovakia needs conceptual, continuous and long lasting solutions based on the broadest possible consensus in the whole society on one hand and targeted state policies on the other hand.

The Government shall therefore arrange for the re-assessment of eligibility criteria for State Housing Development Fund grants in such a way that the only criterion be monthly family income. The target recipient group for this grant to build or purchase an apartment in a family house or residential house should only be families with medium or low income. There is a need to legislate and define the term "medium income" (in the current situation it is not meaningful to give state grants the high income groups).

The Government shall assure the amendment of the mortgage law so that this type of funding will become more open and available as a supplementary source of funding also to low income families (this shall apply mainly to its interest rate).

The Government shall support the implementation of projects addressing the comprehensive re-socialization of the Romany community living in Romany settlements, which in addition to the housing issue include also education and training, employment, counselling, etc. In this respect the Government shall also create conditions for foreign entities to participate with their own capital in the implementation of housing programmes for the Roma.

The Government shall support the links among housing policy, job creation, protection of the environment by preserving cultural heritage, mobilizing resources and maximizing their use efficiency and shall make the best of the personal engagement of members of the Romany community in the re-building of their own settlement.

The proposed measures create conditions for applying state housing policy to the Romany national minority. A more significant development of housing construction is not realistic if no further decisive measures are adopted. In this respect the Government can play a constructive role only if it can secure sufficient funds. However, this goal is determined by the implementation of a consistent economic policy concept that will create conditions for a significant drop of unemployment, growth of real income and improvement of everyday life quality. Defining housing development as one of the Government's priorities and consistently implementing this goal reduces the risk of social conflicts. Recovery of housing development shall reduce unemployment and, consequently, the expenses of the social sector. The fact that houses are built mainly from local materials and that the funds provided for housing development shall be partially paid back to the state in the form of taxes paid by construction and industrial companies participating in the housing development is also important.

The presented proposals reflect a change of priorities in subsidies granted for housing development and mainly the changes of eligibility criteria for grants from the State Housing Development Fund which shall be granted to low and medium income families. The experience gained so far with grants provided under currently valid legislation indicates that except of the statement that it covers the housing issue of socially underprivileged population groups, which also include the citizens belonging to the Romany national minority and living in the Romany settlements, it has nothing in common with the need to address the difficulties of this group of people.

Social sector. The transition from centrally planned economy to social market economy is also linked with changes in the social situation of citizens, households and families. This transition has introduced changes into the hierarchy of values, status enjoyed by individual professions, social groups and traditional customs.

The transition period is accompanied by significant price and wage shifts that extensively influence the social situation of citizens by reducing their real income levels and, eventually, lowering their overall standard of living. The development of the social structure of the society has entered a stage featuring the occurrence of significant social differences. In terms of the achieved standard of living the most endangered groups of population clearly include the statistically significant group of persons belonging to the Romany national minority, living mostly in Romany settlements, suffering from high unemployment, low level of education and housing. All this also determines their social standard, which is the lowest.

In addition to low skills among the Roma, the lack of job opportunities in the labour market is one of the basic factors cementing the stability of the current social status of a part of the Romany national minority.

The system of social assistance grants has to be linked with the system of unemployment benefits in such a way that the citizens of Romany ethnic origin are encouraged to find employment. This will result in a more just social system based on personal responsibility of the citizen, participation, social solidarity and state guarantee.

The described factors clearly show that the Romany national minority is not capable to change their social status alone, without the support extended by the majority. It also shows that the majority is not capable to help the Roma to achieve the same starting position for enjoying equal opportunities characterizing a fully emancipated citizen of this country unless the majority changes their patterns of thinking, attitudes and approaches.

Social field workers operating usually directly in Romany communities were the first vehicles of social assistance. Resolution of the Government No. 310/96 and 977/95 has established this function and its workers were covered by the departments of social affairs at district authorities, where they worked in field of care for citizens requiring special assistance. Resolution of the Government No. 861/98 removed the institution of Government Commissioner for the Solution of the Problems of Citizens Requiring Special Assistance and the following Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic No. 127/99 appointed Government Commissioner on Roma Affairs. New socio-economic conditions and the need of special attention paid by the Government to the solution of specific Roma problems initiated this change. Now it is necessary to implement the plans and objectives of the Strategy of the Government in field, in practice. Therefore, the Government shall assure that social field workers employed on the basis of the above resolution of the Government have such job description, which also includes addressing of Romany national minority problems in their regions.

For the reason that the state's social policy must become a stimulating element of socio-economic development of the society rather than its hindrance, and it must motivate for work and solidarity, and it must prevent social exclusion of a part of the society, the Government shall provide for the creation of prerequisites for a broader participation of voluntary charity organizations, clubs, foundations and other non-governmental organizations in the system of social assistance extended to the Romany community living mainly in the Romany settlements.

Health status. The health care in the Romany population has never been studied in detail and a systemic way in the Slovak Republic, even though, this problem has a significant social, societal and economic impact. It is generally known that the health status of the Romany population, including children, is much worse than the average health status of majority population. The consequence of this is a higher and earlier mortality. These statements result from several statistics.

Low level of education of the Romany population, the resulting low level of social awareness, low standard of housing and personal hygiene have also affected their health

status. The Romany settlements have substandard municipal hygiene, polluted and devastated environment. Potable water supply is missing. Drug consumption, alcohol drinking and smoking proliferate increasingly. All these factors have a significant effect on the level of hygiene and the resulting morbidity and infectious diseases.

In order to improve the health status of the Romany population the Government shall provide for improved hygiene, health awareness and prevention through education and training. The Government shall provide for conditions that will change the dietary habits and generally influence the social, cultural and value orientation of the Romany population in the field of health.

The Government shall provide for conditions that will allow continuation of implementation of projects dealing with education for marriage, responsible parenthood and the use of contraceptives and preventive examinations of persons living mainly in settlements. It shall provide for better prenatal care, care for health of future mothers and their children.

Under its education programme the Government shall provide for a targeted education in healthy diet, personal hygiene, education for parenthood, promotion of vaccination, prevention against drug addictions, etc.

Regional development. The adoption of the Strategy of the Government shall provide for the creation of conditions for addressing the Romany national minority issues directly in the field. These measures should then be translated into measures prepared by ministries and regional authorities which positively stimulate the creation of conditions for the development of the Romany national minority in those areas of life where this minority was discriminated against long ago in the past by being marginalized in their participation in the solution of their own problems as well as in the creation of a broader context of living conditions.

The measures of the Government shall be devised in such a way that they will help to gradually overcome backwardness and to secure conditions for equal opportunities. Addressing of problems shall be brought down to the place where they originate and to the level of responsible entities in the region. Concrete projects of Romany national minority development shall be used to create equal opportunities. There is already some experience with such projects and the Government has approved them in their Resolution No. 715/99. Other projects shall be drafted in this spirit in the places where the problems should be tackled, i.e. the local and regional levels, and they should also include the indication of funds needed from the state budget.

The strengthening of local self-governments competencies in economic functions, public services, housing, schools, social assistance, health care, culture and other areas combined with greater competencies in tax issues and funds use should also form a part of the solution of the Romany challenge. Currently, this issue is tackled in the preparation for a reform of public administration. The envisaged strengthening of local self-government powers should be included in the amendment of Act of the Slovak National Council No. 369/90 Coll. on the municipal system. The establishment of regional self-government, so common in the EU Member States (in this country called higher territorial self-governmental units) is considered an option in this reform. The establishment of regional self-governments should be achieved in 2001. Higher territorial self-governmental units should perform those self-governmental functions that cannot be performed by individual municipalities on the grounds of availability, economy and efficiency of administration. The main mission of higher territorial self-governmental units will be to provide for the social and economic development of the territorial self-governmental unit including the drafting and approving of foreign assistance programmes as a part of regional development in co-operation with state administration. This will improve the possibilities of addressing Roma problems, equalizing

the difference in infrastructure and performance of all supra-municipal public administration services for all municipalities, territories and their inhabitants.

Under current legislation regulating competencies in public administration individual projects shall be reviewed by an expert commission and after their opinion they shall be submitted to the government for approval. Draft decision of the Government puts an emphasis on Government's decision-making concerning the projects twice in a year.

The project drafting process envisages participation of those directly concerned by the solution of a certain situation in a project. The projects shall take into account conditions for an active participation in their implementation of those who should be helped with the project.

Funding. The Government of the Slovak Republic plans to fund this programme from the budget, in particular from the regional budgets, EU PHARE programme, and national and international foundations. In the last case the Government shall support co-financing models.

The position of the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic on the funding of individual tasks resulting from the Year 2000 Strategy of the Government is such that it can only be covered within the limits of the Premises for the 2000 State Budget Draft. Therefore, the 2000 state budget does not have room for increasing the resources and the tasks adopted can be funded only from the funds available in the individual chapters of the state budget. In the future, when local self-governments will have more competencies the situation in funding the individual tasks shall be easier.

Ministries and regional authorities shall submit such measures for 2000 that can be achieved within the limits of the relevant budget chapters. The draft resolution of the Government also includes the financial requirement of 60 million Slovak crowns for the year 2000 from the General Treasury Administration chapter – a reserve for concrete projects concerning the problems of the Romany national minority. These funds shall strictly be allocated only for the defined use – i.e. **concrete projects**. The limits for individual projects shall be approved by the Government in separate resolutions.

A commission headed by the Government Commissioner on Roma Affairs shall evaluate project appropriateness. Deputy Prime Minister for Human Rights, Minorities and Regional Development shall submit the draft to the Government of the Slovak Republic.

Quantification of requirements for the 2001 and following state budgets in order to implement concrete measures is a part of the approval procedure. Therefore, the draft of the Resolution of the Government fully respects these requirements.

The List of Respondents

Ministries

1. Ministry of Defence
2. Ministry of Economy
3. Ministry of Agriculture
4. Ministry of Health
5. Ministry of Education
6. Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
7. Ministry of Construction and Public Works
8. Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications
9. Ministry for the Environment
10. Ministry for the Interior
11. Ministry of Culture
12. Ministry of Finance
13. Ministry of Justice

Regional authorities

1. Regional Agency (RA) Zilina
2. RA Nitra
3. RA Kosice
4. RA Trencin
5. RA Presov
6. RA Trnava
7. RA Bratislava
8. RA Banska Bystrica

Romany entities

1. Union of Romany Women, Stara Lubovna
2. ROMA LAVUTA. Roznava
3. Democratic Unity of the Roma, Humenne
4. Roma Women s Club of the Slovak Republic
5. Roma Civic Initiative of the Slovak Republic, Kosice
6. Romany Christian Democratic Movement in the Slovak Republic
7. Romany Intellectuals for Co-existence in the Slovak Republic
8. Club of Romany Entrepreneurs
9. ROMA-GEMER cultural and educational organization in Slovakia
10. AHINSA ROMA – Non-Violence
11. JEKHETANE – Together
12. ROMA NOVOHRAD
13. 36 Romany Personalities
14. members of the Advisory Board to the Government Commissioner on Roma Affairs

Research institutes

1. Research Institute of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
2. State Pedagogical Institute, Bratislava
3. Institute of National Minorities at the Faculty of Pedagogics, Constantine the Philosopher University, Nitra
4. Institute of Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Kosice
5. Institute of Ethnography of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava

Non-governmental Organizations

1. OPEN SOCIETY FUND, Bratislava
2. School Wide Open Foundation, Zdiar nad Hronom
3. Civil Society Foundation, Bratislava
4. PRO FAMILIA, Humenne
5. Academy of Education, Bratislava

Universities

1. Department of Romany Culture, Constantine the Philosopher University, Nitra
2. Faculty of Arts, University of Presov